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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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EO 12065: GDS 10/30/86 (RUSER, CLAUS W.) OR-M
TAGS: SHUM, AR
SUBJECT: ANTI-SEMITISM IN ARGENTINA

1. [REDACTED] INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY. AN ANTI-SEMITIC INTERVIEW ON ONE OF THE GOVERNMENT-RUN TV STATIONS HAS BROUGHT NEW ATTENTION TO THE ISSUE OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN ARGENTINA. IN OUR VIEW, THERE IS A RELATIVELY HIGH LEVEL OF POPULAR ANTI-SEMITISM HERE OF A NINETEENTH CENTURY VARIETY -- UNSYSTEMATIC, NONVIOLENT AND A REFLECTION OF THIS COUNTRY'S CONSERVATISM AND CULTURAL LAG. THIS WIDESPREAD SENTIMENT NOURISHES A MORE VICIOUS TWENTIETH CENTURY VARIETY THAT CAN BE VIOLENT AND EXISTS TODAY IN ISOLATED POCKETS. THERE IS NO OFFICIAL ANTI-SEMITIC POLICY AND THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IS IN MANY WAYS WELL INTEGRATED INTO NATIONAL LIFE. THROUGH OMISSION, VARIOUS ASPECTS OF ANTI-SEMITISM ARE REFLECTED IN AREAS WHERE THE GOA THEORETICALLY HAS DECISION-MAKING POWER -- LIKE THE CONTROVERSIAL TV PROGRAM.

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WHETHER THE POLICYMAKERS HAVE THE POWER -- WILL APART -- TO EXERCISE SUCH CONTROL IS MOOT AT THIS POINT.

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WE WILL TRY TO FIND WAYS TO ENCOURAGE THE
GOA TO PUBLICLY DISASSOCIATE ITSELF FROM ANTI-SEMITIC
ATTITUDES. END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

2. (U) THE ISSUE OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN ARGENTINA IS
RECEIVING NEW ATTENTION FOLLOWING AN OCTOBER 27
TELEVISION PROGRAM WHICH DISSEMINATED OVERTLY ANTI-
SEMITIC ATTITUDES. THE FORMAT WAS A POPULAR EVENING
INTERVIEW BROADCAST CONDUCTED BY ENRIQUE LLAMAS DE
MADARIAGA. LLAMAS' GUEST WAS JAIME ROZENBLUM,
AN ARGENTINE JEW. OSTENSIBLY DESIGNED TO EXAMINE
THE SITUATION OF THE ARGENTINE JEWISH COMMUNITY, THE
PROGRAM TURNED OUT TO BE AN INQUISITION OF ROZENBLUM
BY LLAMAS WHOSE HOSTILE QUESTIONS WERE DELIVERED IN
AN EQUALLY NASTY MANNER. LLAMAS' LINE OF QUESTIONING
REFLECTED A BELIEF THAT JEWS ARE ESSENTIALLY FAGINS -
LOYAL ONLY TO THE STATE OF ISRAEL -- WHO PROBABLY
DESERVED WHATEVER TREATMENT THEY HAVE RECEIVED OVER THE
YEARS. A SAMPLE OF THE LINE OF LLAMAS' QUESTIONS INCLUDES:
"IF JEWS HAVE BEEN PERSECUTED OVER 4,000 YEARS, THERE MUST BE
A REASON, DON'T YOU THINK? WHY DO PEOPLE SAY JEWS ARE GREEDY?
WHY ARE THERE NO POOR JEWS? WHY DO JEWS GET MORE EMOTIONAL
ABOUT ISRAEL THAN ABOUT TUCUMAN? (AN ARGENTINE PROVINCE) TURNING
ASIDE AND REJECTING ROZENBLUM'S EFFORTS TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT,
LLAMAS MADE IT QUITE CLEAR THAT AS FAR AS HE IS CONCERNED THE
CASE AGAINST JEWS, AS REFLECTED IN HIS QUESTIONS, STANDS.

3. (U) THE PROGRAM HAS PRODUCED ONLY LIMITED REACTION
IN THE PRESS THUS FAR. ON OCTOBER 28, CLARIN, A MASS
CIRCULATION DAILY, REPORTED THE INTERVIEW IN A MANNER
THAT SHOWED THAT IT WAS IN COMPLETE DISAGREEMENT WITH
[REDACTED]
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THE TONE AND THE SUBSTANCE OF THE QUESTIONS. AND THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE BUENOS AIRES HERALD CARRIED A LONG
ARTICLE WRITTEN BY RABBI MARSHALL MEYER, AN AMERICAN AND
LONG-TIME RESIDENT IN ARGENTINA. MEYER, AMONG OTHER
POINTS, STATED THAT, "THE FACT THAT SUCH A SERIES OF
QUESTIONS CAN BE MADE TO AN ARGENTINE JEW ON A GOVERNMENT-
OWNED AND RUN TV CHANNEL ON PRIME TIME SHOULD BE ENOUGH
TO STRIKE HORROR IN THE HEARTS, NOT OF ANY JEW, BUT OF
ANY FREEDOM-LOVING ENLIGHTENED ARGENTINE WHO WANTS TO
SEE A PLURALISTIC DEMOCRACY IN THE FUTURE." (IN MAKING
THIS CASE, HE MIGHT HAVE ADDED, BUT DID NOT, THAT LLAMAS
IS THE BROTHER OF GENERAL ANTONIO LLAMAS, PRESIDENT

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VIDELA'S PRESS SECRETARY.)

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4. [REDACTED] COMMENT: THE ISSUE OF ANTI-SEMITISM HERE IS A
COMPLEX ONE AND ANY SIMPLISTIC STATEMENTS ABOUT IT
ARE WRONG. THE SIZE OF THE LOCAL JEWISH COMMUNITY IS CONTROVERSIAL.
ONE OF THE MOST RECENT AND POSSIBLY THE MOST ACCURATE
SURVEYS OF THE ARGENTINE JEWISH COMMUNITY PLACES ITS

MEMBERSHIP AT ABOUT 300,000. ACCORDING TO SOME
ACCOUNTS, IT WAS ONCE LARGER, PERHAPS APPROACHING
450,000. WHATEVER THE ABSOLUTE NUMBERS, ASSIMILATION
AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT, EMIGRATION HAVE ERODED ITS
SIZE IN THE LAST GENERATION.

5. [REDACTED] A A KIND OF NINETEENTH CENTURY ANTI-SEMITISM IS
WIDELY DISSEMINATED HERE AMONG THE POPULATION AT LARGE,
AN ATTITUDE UNHAPPILY THAT LLAMAS FAITHFULLY REFLECTED.
ARGENTINA'S NATIONALISM, ITS DEEPLY ROOTED CONSERVATISM
AND ITS CULTURAL LAG ARE EVIDENT THROUGHOUT THE LIFE
OF THE NATION. THESE FACTORS HAVE PRESERVED
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PREJUDICED ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE JEWS -- AND OTHER
MINORITIES -- THAT LONG AGO WERE SET ASIDE IN EUROPE
AND THE UNITED STATES.

6. [REDACTED] PANDEMIC NINETEENTH CENTURY ANTI-SEMITISM
NOURISHES AND HELPS SUSTAIN A MORE VICIOUS AND VIOLENT
VARIETY THAT TODAY EXISTS IN SMALL ISOLATED POCKETS
AND IN THE RECENT PAST FLOURISHED. THE DEMOCRATIC
GOVERNMENTS IN THE EARLY AND MID-1960'S SAW A PARTICULARLY
VIRULENT OUTBREAK. THEN, DURING THE SECURITY
FORCES' WAR AGAINST TERRORISTS AND SUBVERSIVES, MANY
JEWS WERE VICTIMS. SOME, INCLUDING LEADERS OF THE
JEWISH COMMUNITY, DENY THAT THIS REFLECTED ANY EFFORT
TO SINGLE OUT JEWS, NOTING THAT, AS A PERCENTAGE OF
THE POPULATION, INDIVIDUALS OF JEWISH ORIGIN MADE UP
A DISPROPORTIONATE SHARE OF THE GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS
WHICH BORE THE WEIGHT OF THE SECURITY FORCES' ACTIVITIES.
HOWEVER, IN MANY CASES JEWS WHO WERE PICKED
UP BY THE SECURITY FORCES UNDOUBTEDLY QUICKLY EXPERIENCED
ANTI-SEMITIC ATTITUDES AMONG THEIR CAPTORS.

7. [REDACTED] IN SUCH A YEASTY ENVIRONMENT, OFFICIALLY-SPONSORED
ANTI-SEMITISM COULD EASILY THRIVE. IN FACT, AS THE OAS
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION REPORTED AFTER ITS VISIT LAST
YEAR, THERE IS NO SUCH POLICY. THE GOA'S ACTIONS
BELIE THE OCCASIONAL ALLEGATIONS THAT IT
EXISTS. THUS, JEWISH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS FUNCTION
FREELY, JEWS PLAY A PROMINENT ROLE IN THE NATION'S
CULTURAL LIFE, JEWS PRACTICE THEIR RELIGION WITHOUT
OFFICIAL RESTRICT AND JEWS ARE FULL PARTICIPANTS
IN THE NATION'S ECONOMIC LIFE. MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY
ALSO POINT OUT THAT THE GOA, UNLIKE ITS PREDECESSORS,
TOOK STEPS TO MAKE IT LEGALLY POSSIBLE TO COLLECT
[REDACTED]
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AND REMIT MONEY FOR ISRAEL. THE MANDATORY CIVICS COURSE
WHICH ALL CHILDREN MUST TAKE WAS MODIFIED TO
REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY. THIS YEAR, FOR
THE FIRST TIME, PRESIDENT VIDELA'S MESSAGE TO
THE JEWISH COMMUNITY ON THE OCCASION OF THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS
TREATED THE JEWS AS FULLY INTEGRATED MEMBERS OF THE
ARGENTINE NATION -- A GESTURE THAT THE COMMUNITY HERE MUCH
APPRECIATED.

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8. [REDACTED] NONETHELESS, IT IS CLEAR THAT ALL IS NOT WELL HERE REGARDING THE JEWISH COMMUNITY. THE PERFORMANCE OF LLAMAS ON A GOVERNMENT-RUN STATION HEIGHTENS THE BELIEVABILITY OF CHARGES THAT THE GOVERNMENT, THROUGH OMISSION, TOLERATES A LEVEL OF OVERT, ACTIVE ANTI-SEMITISM WITHIN IT RANKS. THE EVIDENCE FOR SUCH TOLERATION IS CIRCUMSTANTIAL AND WOULD NEVER STAND UP IN COURT BUT IT IS UNBLINKABLE:
-- OSTENTATIOUSLY ANTI-JEWISH PUBLICATIONS OF LIMITED CIRCULATION ARE AVAILABLE AT NEWS STANDS ALONGSIDE COPIES OF THE PROTOCOL OF THE ELDERS OF ZION. CRITICS NOTE THAT A GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS PROHIBITED THE SALE OF SOME BOOKS AND LITERATURE FOR THEIR POLITICAL CONTENT TOLERATES SUCH JOURNALS OF HATE.
-- DESPITE MANY EFFORTS, THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT AUTHORIZED THE BROADCAST ON TELEVISION OF "THE HOLO-CAUST," A DELAY THAT IS ATTRIBUTED TO THE RESISTENCE

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OF ANTI-SEMITIC GROUPS.

-- IN JULY AND AUGUST OF THIS YEAR, JEWISH INSTITUTIONS WERE BOMBED AND SCHOOLS RECEIVED NUMEROUS BOMB THREATS. THESE ATTACKS AND THREATS TOOK PLACE AMIDST A MINI WAVE OF BOMBING AND THREATS BUT, AS JEWS HERE OBSERVE, THE

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WEIGHT OF THESE ATTACKS AND THREATS FELL DISPROPORTIONATELY ON JEWISH INSTITUTIONS. THE CULPRITS WERE NEVER FOUND BUT MANY WERE SUSPECTED -- ALBEIT WITHOUT EVIDENCE -- THAT ELEMENTS IN THE SECURITY FORCES WERE RESPONSIBLE.

-- THERE IS A WIDESPREAD AND PROBABLY ACCURATE IMPRESSION THAT STRONGLY ANTI-SEMITIC ATTITUDES ARE ESPECIALLY PREVALENT AMONG SECURITY FORCES (AND A SERIES OF STUDIES DONE DURING THE 1960'S SHOW THAT, AS A GROUP, THE MILITARY HERE WAS RELATIVELY MORE ANTI-SEMITIC AS A WHOLE THAN THE ARGENTINE POPULATION

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AT LARGE).

9. [REDACTED] IT IS NOT CLEAR THAT THE POLITICAL LEVEL OF THE GOA HAS THE POWER TO FULLY CONTROL SUCH EVENTS, WHATEVER ITS WILL. SUCH A RECORD CONSTITUTES A CATALOGUE OF OMISSION RATHER THAN COMMISSIONS BY THE GOA. IT CERTAINLY DID NOT STIMULATE THE BOMBINGS THIS YEAR, FOR EXAMPLE, AND IT MAY HAVE QUIETLY PREVAILED ON THE AUTHORS OF THESE ATTACKS TO DESIST. WE DO NOT EXPECT THAT SUCH OMISSIONS WILL SOON BE CORRECTED BY VIGOROUS ACTION AGAINST ANTI-SEMITIC ACTIVISTS WITHIN OR BEYOND THE GOVERNMENT. BUT NEITHER DO WE

EXPECT THAT THE GOA WILL OFFICIALLY CONDONE VIOLENT ATTACKS ON THE JEWS AND THEIR INSTITUTIONS. WE WOULD HOPE TO SEE THE GOA MOVE FORWARD TO ACTIVELY DISASSOCIATE ITSELF FROM ANY TAIN OF ANTI-SEMITISM, EVEN ACTS OF OMISSION. OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS WE WILL BE SEEKING TO ENCOURAGE SUCH MOVEMENT, IF NOTHING ELSE AS AN ACT OF SELF INTEREST BY A GOVERNMENT WHOSE IMAGE ABOARD IS ALREADY BADLY TARNISHED.

SHLAUDEMANN

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